

ISMS Annual Conference 2015-Revolution of War

AKDENİZ, Metin
akdenizmetin@yahoo.com
Turkish War Colleges

1st World war-Çanakkale (Dardanelles) warfare, a milestone for the next centuries

ABSTRACT

In the World War I; Ottoman Empire had been allied with Central Powers which was led by Germany. Hence Allied Powers, mainly England and France, thought that it was the high time to pass the Turkish straits (Çanakkale-Dardanelles and Bosphorus) in order to give an hand to Russia by defeating Ottomans which was named as “sick man”. They prepared a comprehensive campaign plan, so did the Ottomans for defensive. According to the allied plan, Allied Powers, the Royal Navy with substantial support from the French and minor contributions from Russia and Australia, would force through Çanakkale Strait (Dardanelles) with a state of art naval power and occupy İstanbul, the Capital. Maritime operations were launched in November, 1914. Right after the last devastating and destructive naval attacks and bombardments of which happened on March 18, 1915, maritime operations were unsuccessful and a clear defeat. The Ottoman minelayer Nusret played a key role at the naval defensive operations of Ottomans by laying a line of mines in Eren Köy Bay, just inside the entrance to the straits.

Allied Powers figured out that a land operations had to be launched against Ottoman troops in Gallipoli peninsula. With the hope of removing despondency of failure they experienced in the sea, Allied Powers had set out the assault on Gallipoli Peninsula. In accordance with the treaty signed on August 1914, German generals and staff officers also served as advisers and military commanders for the Ottoman army along with Turkish generals and officers. Land Warfare had been tremendously bloody for both sides. Allied Powers, English and French troops and colonial soldiers, having landed in Gallipoli peninsula on April 25, 1915 could not make any progress. At a critical stage of war, then an Ottoman Officer, Mustafa Kemal’s influence on his troops by saying “*I am ordering you to die, not to fight*” affected the destiny of the war. Under his command and control the defensive had been very vigorous and successful. As a military leader he set up example of being on the spot, showing leadership, making quick and sound decisions, taking initiative and convincing his soldiers of the victory. As a result, Allied Powers could not finish up the landing and suffered a lot against the defensive. They retreated totally on January 9, 1916 with no gain. D. Lloyd George, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, said later about Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: “*We meet genius people very rarely in centuries. It is so unlucky that, in this century that great genius person belongs to the Turkish Nation. The centuries rarely produce a genius. Look at this bad luck of ours, that great genius of our era was granted to the Turkish nation.*”

There have been vital lessons to be taken for the future of wars and humanitarian point of view. Both sides had suffered heavy losses during the warfare. This battle, which occurred in a narrow land, is one of the bloodiest battles of the history. This war influenced both Turkish and world history from military, political, economic, manpower and educational aspects, as well as social and psychological dimensions while the new adventures had been approaching. Having been assigned from Sofia to the Çanakkale Front voluntarily, he, the founder and the First President of the modern Turkish

ISMS Annual Conference 2015-Revolution of War

Republic, then an Ottoman Officer, played a key role during the campaign as mentioned above. On the a memorial in Canberra, the capital of Australia, the inscription, written by Atatürk, pays tribute to the Anzacs and reflects his understanding about the war in an humanitarian point of view:

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours... You the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."

Although, on one hand the fights between two sides were very fierce, sometimes unbelievable, on the other hand the relations between the two side's soldiers were humanistic. Whatever soldiers managed there were the basics for the future legal arrangements on war. Against all odds, they never forgot that they were fighting human beings, not the enemies. The attitude of soldiers have contributed a lot in creating friendships between "the old enemies." Besides, this war, in a way, shaped the future alliances and wars. Especially it paved the way for Russia's future. It has been giving inspirations to the strategists as to naval and land war strategies and tactics. In this study, it was mentioned basically how the warfare was fought laying stress on the other face of the war, what were the strategies and tactics behind and what consequences/lessons appeared after the war.

Keywords: Çanakkale (Dardanelles) Warfare, Ottoman Empire, Allied Powers, Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK, strategy, leadership.